Erdgeist (Earth-spirit) a tragedy in four acts

Wedekind Frank
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Author: Wedekind Frank

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LULU
BY FRANK WEDEKIND
ERDGEIST (EARTH SPIRIT) $1.00
PANDORA'S BOX (IN PREPARATION)
ERDGEIST

(Earth-Spirit)

'A Tragedy in Four Acts

BY

FRANK WEDEKIND

Translated by Samuel A. Eliot, Jr.

NEW YORK
ALBERT AND CHARLES BONI

1914
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by

Albert and Charles Boni
"I was created out of ranker stuff
By Nature, and to the earth by Lust am drawn.
Unto the spirit of evil, not of good,
The earth belongs. What deities send to us
From heaven are only universal goods;
Their light gives gladness, but makes no man rich;
And in their state possession not obtains.
Therefore, the stone of price, all-treasured gold,
Must from the powers of falsehood be enticed,
The evil race that dwells beneath the day.
Not without sacrifice their favor is gained,
And no man liveth who from serving them
Hath extricated undefiled his soul."
CHARACTERS

DR. SCHÖN, newspaper owner and editor.
ALVA, his son, a writer.
DR. GOLL, M.D.
SCHWARZ, an artist.
PRINCE ESCERNY, an African explorer.
ESCHERICH, a reporter.
SCHIGOLCH, a beggar.
RODRIGO, an acrobat.
HUGENBERG, a schoolboy *(played by a girl.)*
FERDINAND, a coachman.
LULU.
COUNTESS GESCHWITZ.
HENRIETTE, a servant.
PROLOGUE

(At rise, is seen the entrance to a tent, out of which steps an animal-tamer, with long, black curls, dressed in a white cravat, a vermilion dress-coat, white trowsers and white top-boots. He carries in his left hand a dog-whip and in his right a loaded revolver, and enters to the sound of cymbals and kettle-drums.)

Walk in! Walk in to the menagery,
Proud gentlemen and ladies lively and merry!
With avid lust or cold disgust, the very
Beast without Soul bound and made secondary
To human genius, to stay and see!
Walk in, the show’ll begin!—As customary,
One child to each two persons comes in free.

Here battle man and brute in narrow cages
Where one in haught disdain his long whip lashes
And one, with growls as when the thunder rages,
Against the man’s throat murderously dashes,—
Where now the crafty conquers, now the strong,
Now man, now beast, lies cowed the floor along;
The animal rears,—the human on all-fours!
One ice-cold look of dominance—
The beast submissive bows before that glance,
And the proud heel upon his neck adores.

Bad are the times! Ladies and gentlemen
Who once before my cage in thronging crescents
Crowded, now honor operas, and then
Ibsen, with their so highly valued presence.
My boarders here are so in want of fodder
That they reciprocally devour each other.
How well off at the theater is a player,
Sure of the meat upon his ribs, albeit
His frightful hunger may tear him and he it
And colleagues' inner cupboards be quite bare!—
Greatness in art we struggle to inherit,
Although the salary never match the merit.

What see you, whether in light or sombre plays?
House-animals, whose morals all must praise,
Who wreak pale spites in vegetarian ways,
And revel in an easy cry or fret,
Just like those others—down in the parquet.
This hero has a head by one dram swirled;
That is in doubt whether his love be right;
A third you hear despairing of the world,—
Full five acts long you hear him wail his plight,
And no man ends him with a merciful sleight!
But the real beast, the beautiful, wild beast,
Your eyes on that, I, ladies, only feast!

You see the Tiger, that habitually
Devours whatever falls before his bound;
The Bear, so ravenous originally,
Who at a late night-meal sinks dead to ground;
You see the Monkey, little and amusing,
From sheer ennui his petty powers abusing,—
He has some talent, of all greatness scant,
So, impudently, coquettes with his own want!
Upon my soul, within my tent's a mammal,
See, right behind the curtain, here,—a Camel!
And all my creatures fawn about my feet
When my revolver cracks—

(He shoots into the audience.)

Behold!

Brutes tremble all around me. I am cold:
The man stays cold,—you, with respect, to greet.

Walk in!—You hardly trust yourselves in here?—
Then very well, judge for yourselves! Each sphere
Has sent its crawling creatures to your telling:
Chameleons and serpents, crocodiles,
Dragons, and salamanders chasm-dwelling,—
I know, of course, you’re full of quiet smiles
And don’t believe a syllable I say.—

(He lifts the entrance-flap and calls into the tent.)

Hi, Charlie!—bring our Serpent just this way!

(A stage-hand with a big paunch carries out the actress
of Lulu in her Pierrot costume, and sets her down before
the animal-tamer.)

She was created to incite to sin,
To lure, seduce, poison—yea, murder, in
A manner no man knows.—My pretty beast,

(Tickling Lulu’s chin.)

Only be unaffected, and not pieced
Out with distorted, artificial folly,
Even if the critics praise thee for ’t less wholly.
Thou hast no right to spoil the shape most fitting,
Most true, of woman, with meows and spitting!
And mind, all foolery and making faces
The childish simplicity of Vice disgraces.
Thou shouldst—to-day I speak emphatically—
Speak naturally and not unnaturally,
For the first principle in every art,
Since earliest times, was True and Plain, not Smart!

(To the public.)
There's nothing special now to see in her,
But wait and watch what later will occur!
Her strength about the Tiger she coils stricter:
He roars and groans!—Who'll be the final victor?—
Hop, Charlie, march! Carry her to her place,

(The stage-hand carries Lulu in his arms; the animal-
tamer pats her on the hips.)

Sweet innocence—my dearest treasure-case!

(The stage-hand carries Lulu back into the tent.)

And now I'll tell the best thing in the day:
My poll between the teeth of a beast of prey!
Walk in! Tho to be sure the show's not new,
Yet everyone takes pleasure in its view!
Wrench open this wild animal’s jaws I dare,
And he to bite dares not! My pate's so fair,
So wild, so gaily decked, it wins respect!
I offer it him with confidence unchecked.
One joke, and my two temples crack!—but, lo,
The lightning of my eyes I will forego,
Staking my life against a joke! and throw
My whip, my weapons, down. I am in my skin!
I yield me to this beast!—His name do ye know?
—The honored public! that has just walked in!

(The animal-tamer steps back into the tent, accompanied
by cymbals and kettledrums.)